

WASHINGTON - **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin** (D-MD), **House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer** (D-MD) and **U.S. Rep. Sam Johnson**

(R-TX) hailed House today of legislation they have sponsored to grant a Federal Charter to the Korean War Veterans Association (KWVA), one of the few veterans' service organizations of its size that has not been recognized with the prestigious classification. The bill, which has already passed the Senate, will now be sent to the President.

"Korean War veterans deserve the same official recognition for their struggles and sacrifices on behalf of freedom that other veterans enjoy," **said Majority Leader Steny Hoyer.** "Granting this Federal Charter delivers a long overdue honor to the 5.7 million Americans who fought and served during the Korean War. It is but a small expression of this nation's eternal appreciation for the extraordinary courage and sacrifice of our Korean War veterans."

"The Korean War is often referred to as the 'forgotten' war, and recognition of our veterans from this war is long-overdue," **said Senator Benjamin L. Cardin.** "This legislation would let the nearly 1.2 million American veterans of the Korean War who are still alive know that we have not forgotten them, and we honor the sacrifice they made for our nation."

"We owe a debt of gratitude to the brave men and women who valiantly served in the Korean War," **said Congressman Sam Johnson, a 29-year Air Force veteran who flew 62 combat missions during the Korean War.** "Many paid the ultimate price for freedom. The Korean War veterans want, need and deserve a national charter and the prestige it offers. I'm gratified that we could finally make it happen. Considering the Korean War armistice occurred in 1953, the proclamation of a national charter is long overdue."

Congress has long recognized various military and veteran "patriotic" organizations in public law as a means to acknowledge that a group serves the public interest by providing member services and community support. In addition to bestowing special recognition, granting this charter to the Korean War Veterans Association would allow it to expand its mission and further its charitable and benevolent causes.

Specifically, it will afford the Association the same status as other major organizations and would allow it to participate as part of select committees with other Congressionally-chartered veterans and military groups. A Federal Charter will also help the Association gain accreditation

with the Department of Veterans Affairs, which will enable its members to assist in processing veterans' claims.

President of the Korean War Veterans Association Louis Dechert, said, "The vote taken today in the House of Representatives granting a Federal Charter to the Korean War Veterans Association is an historic moment for our organization, providing for equal status with the many other fine hard working Veterans Service Organizations with whom we have been serving for so many years. The Korean War Veterans Association will accept this Federal Charter with gratitude and will initiate the efforts necessary to carry out the charter responsibilities conferred on us by The Congress.

Continued Dechert, "This action is the culmination of many years of effort on the part of Congressmen Hoyer and Johnson in the House, Senator Paul Sarbanes - who successfully obtained passage of the KWVA charter bill in each session during the past four years - and Senator Cardin - the lead Senate sponsor in the current session of Congress. We are grateful to them for all their efforts on behalf of the nation's Korean War veterans."

The Korean War, often overlooked in American history, is anything but forgotten by the nearly 1.2 million American veterans of the Korean War still alive today. During the three-year course of the war, some 5.7 million Americans were called to serve, and by the time the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed in July 1953, more than 36,000 Americans sacrificed their lives, 103,284 were wounded, 7,140 were captured and 664 were missing.

The KWVA is the only fraternal veterans' organization in the United States devoted exclusively to Korean War veterans and the only U.S. member of the International Federation of Korean War Veterans Association. Incorporated in 1985, the 25,000-member charitable association has established a strong record of service and commitment to fellow Korean War veterans, ranging from efforts on behalf of Project Freedom to its successful effort to construct a national Korean War Veterans Memorial on the National Mall.

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